

**TITLE:** Narrative Paradigms in Muslim Identity: A qualitative investigation of seven Atlanta case studies

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### **Introduction:**

Individuals often use their religious lives to reconstruct their memories in a process known as selective filtering. Grounded in the theory and methods of cultural psychology and religious studies, this research uses qualitative methods to examine narrative paradigms. Careful analysis of qualitative information is essential in understanding human behavior and the process of decision making when articulating memories. Additionally, this project uses two theories from psychological research:

- Attribution theory: Explains the cause of selective behaviors and events after information is gathered to form a perceived causal relationship.
- Attention theory: The cognitive process, which focuses on selective attention undermining other details. The thought process is the same, but we choose to have spotlight on things that are relevant to us as human nature.

The primary purpose of this study is to gain insight into the psychological role of narratives and identity from a subset of adult Muslims in the Atlanta metropolitan area.

### **Method:**

As part of a larger interdisciplinary investigation of religious identities in Atlanta, this project uses data from seven semi-structured interviews to form a qualitative coding system in which the narratives are understood through thematic structures and autobiographical perceptions of experience.

Within these paradigms, we identified patterns of storied attention by examining elements of identity, expression, and memory construction. By using several models of attribution theory, the coded data offers insight into the narrative process and the ways in which the participants focus on selective themes such as, major central life experiences, religious identity, cultural assimilation, and personality description.

### **Results:**

The interviews were coded to analyze how each participant makes meaning of their own “narrative self.” By using several models of attribution theory, the coded data shows a high frequency of belief modification, cultural assimilation, and familial identity. We determined that selective paradigms occur together repeatedly and filter experiences which do not fit within the narrative types.

**Conclusion:**

Our findings allowed for us to gain more insight into the psychological role of narratives and identity among the data subset of Muslim research participants. The research, to date, has found interesting paradigms of identity homogenization and normative divergence. In the contemporary context of Atlanta, many Muslims are actively aware of converging and diverging facts within their own individual identity.

By using several models of attribution theory, our qualitative analysis offers insight into the narrative process, and the ways in which participants tend to reconstruct memories through selective themes.

**Keywords:**

Religion, Muslim, Identity, Narrative, Qualitative